

ROCKLAND TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES

July 26, 2023

The monthly meeting of the Rockland Township Planning Commission was held on July 26, 2023 beginning at 7:30PM. The following members of the Planning Commission were present: William Fredericks, William McFadden, Richard Mazich, Nancy Ogden and Nathan Roush. Also in attendance were: Solicitor Michelle Mayfield (Hartman, Valeriano, Magovern & Lutz, PC), Township Supervisor Nathan Ohlinger, Nicole Schwenk (LTL Consultants, Ltd.), Jackie Hollenbach (Mack Engineering), and interested citizens.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30PM by Chairman William Fredericks.

The minutes of the June 28, 2023 Planning Commission meeting were reviewed. On a motion by Nathan Roush, seconded by William McFadden, the minutes of the June 28, 2023 Planning Commission meeting were approved as presented. There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Rahma Meadow of Mercy Cemetery Minor Land Development Final Plan – 17 Fleetwood Road

- Plan review period expires 8/31/2023. Deadline for Planning Commission action on plan is 7/26/2023.
- A plan review extension request was received from Mr. Ehtesham Khoyratty on 7/20/2023.

On a motion by Nathan Roush, seconded by Nancy Ogden, the Planning Commission approved the plan review extension request from Mr. Khoyratty for the Rahma Meadow of Mercy Cemetery Minor Land Development Final Plan until November 30, 2023 (and recommended the Board of Supervisors do the same). There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Berks Nature Minor Subdivision (Final Plan) - 90 Smoketown Road

- Plan review period expires 9/26/2023. Deadline for PC action on plan is 8/30/2023.
- Berks County Planning Commission Review Letter received 7/10/2023.
- Revised Final Minor Subdivision Plan submittal received by Rockland Township on 7/12/2023.
- Township Engineer's 2nd Final Plan Review Letter received 7/17/2023.
- Waiver Request Letter from Berks Surveying & Engineering received 7/12/2023.
- Waiver Request and Berks Nature & Dent-Gundry Wildlife Preserve Background Information was provided to the Township by Mr. Larry Lloyd, Berks Nature on 7/13/2023.

Mr. Rob Hain provided a brief overview of the Berks Nature Minor Subdivision plan reminding Township officials that this plan proposes no new development. An interested citizen inquired to Mr. Larry Lloyd, Berks Nature as to whether there would be any public access to the land (residue lot). Mr. Lloyd commented that much of the land is forested wetlands, so there will be hunting and such with a program, but there is no planned public access to the property and there are no planned new parking areas. The residue lot will be a nature preserve according to Mr. Lloyd with no planned trails on the property. Mr. Norman Burkholder commented that the Township's requirements for monuments (particularly along the street right of way) can be a real hindrance for farmers trying to farm fields. Nicole Schwenk, LTL Consultants requested an update from Berks Surveying & Engineering regarding the Sunoco Pipeline easement. During the discussion, the Planning Commission reviewed and discussed the two requested waivers regarding monuments and ultimately took the following actions on the two requested waivers:

SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE WAIVERS – BERKS NATURE MINOR SUBDIVISION:

- Section 6:208 – Street Monuments – On a motion by Richard Mazich, seconded by William McFadden, a waiver from Section 6:208 was granted for the Berks Nature Minor Subdivision Final Plan (with recommendation that the Board of Supervisors do the same). There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.
- Section 6:209 – Monuments – On a motion by Richard Mazich, seconded by William McFadden, a waiver from Section 6:209 was granted for the Berks Nature Minor Subdivision Final Plan on the condition that at least one monument be set in the rear where the subdivision is occurring (with recommendation that the Board of Supervisors do the same). There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.

On a motion by William McFadden, seconded by Richard Mazich, the Planning Commission conditionally approved the Berks Nature Minor Subdivision plan pending submittal of a revised plan which adequately addresses all the items referenced in the Township Engineer's 2nd Final Plan review letter dated 7/17/2023 (with recommendation that the Board do the same). There was no public comment. All were in favor. Motion carried.

Act 537 Plan Update – Bursich Associates/Van Cleef Engineering – A monthly update was received from Gus Meyer, Bursich Associates/Van Cleef Engineering including a summary of activities during the month of June 2023. Attorney Mayfield informed the Planning Commission that she is in the process of reviewing the on-lot sewage management program ordinance and holding tank ordinance and will provide input and comments to Gus Meyer and Township officials for review and consideration.

Zoning Ordinance Review/Amendment Project – Attorney Mayfield stated that HVM&L can draft solar regulations, but Township officials will need to decide where to allow solar farms (ag areas, new overlay district, minimum lot sizes, etc.). After a lengthy discussion on solar panels and solar farms, Attorney Mayfield and Jackie Hollenbach agreed to work on proposed language for consideration by Township officials. Attorney Mayfield will also look into whether the Borough of Topton and District Township (the other two municipalities included with the Eastern Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan) allow for solar farms. Township officials also discussed wireless communication facilities regulations, and Attorney Mayfield informed Township officials that she will update the existing regulations for Township officials' review and consideration. Attorney Mayfield and HVM&L will also review Section 9.02.2, Section 9.02.19 and Section 9.36.4 and provide revised language per previous discussions.

Eastern Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan Meeting – The Borough of Topton's Planning Commission is inviting representatives from Rockland Township to attend their **October 11, 2023 meeting at 7:00PM** to preliminarily discuss an update of the Eastern Berks Joint Comprehensive Plan. It was noted that Rockland Township would like to appoint one Planning Commission member to represent Rockland Township at this and future Joint Comp Plan meetings.

Zoning Hearing Board Decision – 75 Dryville Road – A written decision from the Zoning Hearing Board was received for 75 Dryville Road, Fleetwood, PA (Warren and Bonnie Rohde). The applicants' request for zoning relief to construct a 30'x 40' garage was granted.

Zoning Hearing Board Decision – 117 Lyons Road – A written decision from the Zoning Hearing Board was received for 117 Lyons Road, Mertztown, PA (Devon and Rebecca Benetz). The applicants were granted zoning relief to construct a 900 sq. ft. building (rather than 800 sq. ft. as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance) a minimum of 20' from the side property line.

NEW BUSINESS

Berks County Comprehensive Plan Amendment Request – The Berks County Planning Commission is requesting comments on a recent request from both Leesport Borough and Ontelaunee Township regarding changing the Berks County Comprehensive Plan's future land use designations for several parcels from "Future Growth" to "Rural Conservation". The Planning Commission reviewed the correspondence received from the Berks County Planning Commission and offered no comments on Leesport Borough and Ontelaunee Township's recent request to change the Berks County Comprehensive Plan's future land use designations for several parcels from Future Growth to Rural Conservation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:53PM on a motion by William McFadden, seconded by Richard Mazich.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Krall
Secretary